



ON THE CARE OF INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN,

ACCORDING TO THE
BIBLE AND TALMUD.

BY

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Children; Honorary Librarian to the Faculty of Physicians and
Surgeons, Glasgow, &c.)*

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ON THE CARE OF INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN,
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THE care of the infant began before birth. The mother of the unborn babe was warned to avoid certain articles of diet likely to be injurious to the offspring. The Talmud,

(1) The following works have been found of special use:—

Wunderbar (R. J.): "Biblich-talmudische Medicin," Riga und Leipzig, 1850-1860. Rabbinowicz (Israel-Michel): "La Médecine du Thalmud," Paris, 1880. Bergel (Joseph): "Die Medizin der Talmudisten," Leipzig und Berlin, 1885. Kotelmann (L.): "Die Geburtshülfe bei den alten Hebräern," Marburg, 1876. Hershon (P. I.): "Treasures of the Talmud," London, 1882. Hershon (P. I.): "Talmudie Miscellany," London, 1880. Schwab (M.): "Le Talmud de Jerusalem," Tomes I.—X., Paris, 1871-88. The Commentaries of Kalisch on Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus. Asher (Asher): "The Jewish Rite of Circumcision," London, 1873.

Quotations from the Bible are given from the Revised Version, unless otherwise specified.

No attempt has been made to verify the references to the Talmud. These are given solely on the authority of the authors quoted.

referring both to pregnant women and to those who are nursing, says :—

“ Does such a one eat Mustard ? then her child will be a glutton. Does she eat Cress ? then the children will become blear-eyed. Does she eat often of Ill-formed fish ? then their eyes will also be diseased. Does she eat Clay or potter’s-earth ? then will the children be ill-formed. If, on the other hand, she makes use of Meat, Wine, Eggs, good Fish, Parsley, Coriander and Paradise Apples, then will the children be healthy, strong and comely, and will have clear eyes.” (2)

Amulets, formed of meteoric stone, were worn by pregnant women suspended from their necks so as to ward off the danger of abortion : other women, however, who were not pregnant, seem also to have worn these articles. (3)

The *fœtus in utero* was regarded as deriving its life from three sources : from its father, from its mother, and from the Lord.

“ The father gives the white portions, whence come the bones, the nerves and tendons, the nails, the brain, and the white of the eyes. The mother supplies that which is red, whence come the skin, the flesh, the hair, and the black part of the eyes. The Lord gives the spirit, the expression and form ; the vision, hearing and speech ; the power of walking and other movements ; understanding and intellectual aptitude. When death comes, the Lord takes his part and leaves theirs to the parents.” (4)

“ Rav Pappa says :—This is the meaning of the proverb, ‘ Shake off the salt and throw the flesh to the dogs.’ Rashi’s explanatory note is :—Shake off the salt from the flesh and it becomes fit only for dogs. The soul is the salt which preserves the body : when it departs, the body putrefies.” (5)

The life of the embryo is supposed, in the Talmud, to be guarded from its very beginning by an angel, to whose care such matters are assigned. During its long residence *in utero*, the education of the fœtus is likewise supervised by this

(2) Wunderbar : *Bibl.-tal. Med.* ; 2. Abth. ; Riga, 1851, S. 63. His reference is to *Tr. Ketuboth*, 60. Compare quotation subsequently given in this paper on the diet of nursing mothers. Also compare Judges xiii. 4, although this case was, so far, special and exceptional.

(3) Bergel : *Medizin der Talmudisten* ; Leipzig, 1885, S. 56.

(4) Rabbinowicz : *La Méd. du Thalmud*, Paris, 1880, p. 85. Reference to *Nidah*, Fol. 31. The idea of the white and red parts, respectively, seems to be connected with the colour of the sperm and the blood. An almost identical passage is translated by M. Schwab : *Le Talmud de Jerusalem*, Tome II., p. 305. Compare *Wisdom of Solomon*, vii., 2 :—“ Compacted in blood, of the seed of man.”

(5) Hershon : *Talmudic Miscellany*, London, 1880, p. 67.

angel, who instructs it "in all sciences, but especially in the study of the Mosaic and Rabbinical laws. At the moment when parturition begins, however, the same angel gives it a slap on the mouth and all that it has learned is forgotten."⁽⁶⁾

"The sex of the embryo depends upon whether at coition the male or the female seed gets first into the womb. If the former, then female children result; if the latter, male children (*Berach*, 60, 1; *Nida*, 28, 1—31, 2). The difference of sex ought to make itself known, however, even during pregnancy by certain signs. A woman who is pregnant with a male child ought to have a better complexion, and the quickening should occur earlier, and parturition also ought to be easier and less painful. The last-mentioned circumstance is specially insisted upon by the Talmudists (*Nida*, 31, 1)."⁽⁷⁾

Monstrous births, by menstruous women, are mentioned amongst other horrible portents in 2 Esdras, v. 8:—

"And menstruous women shall bring forth monsters."

The occurrence of malformed children, and especially of Hermaphrodites, is thus referred to by Bergel⁽⁸⁾:—

"The Talmudists know of monsters like fish, like insects, like cattle, like animals, and like birds. (*Nida*, 21, 1.) . . . They also refer to Hermaphrodites, and they could not decide whether they belong to the male or female sex: the unfortunate creatures were, on that account, excluded from all civil and religious rights. (*Jebam.* 72, 2—83, 1—99, 2; *Bechor*, 42, 1)."

The Talmudists, however, seem to have had practical views also on the subject of congenital malformations, for amongst other operations referred to are those for imperforate anus and hypospadias.⁽⁹⁾

A special importance attached, in Jewish eyes, to the congenital absence of the prepuce, as this had a direct relation to the rite of circumcision. Tradition alleged that Moses and Job presented this defect at birth.⁽¹⁰⁾

(6) Bergel: *Medizin der Talmudisten*, Leip. 1885, S. 70: the reference is to *Nidah*, 30, 2.

(7) Bergel: *Med. der Talmud.*, S. 73. With regard to the sex of the fœtus, see also Rabbinowicz: *La Méd. du Thal.*, p. 85. The better condition of the woman having a male fœtus, and the easier parturition in such a case, are referred to subsequently in this paper.

(8) Bergel: *Med. der Talm.*, S. 71.

(9) Bergel: *Med. der Talm.*, S. 30. References to *Sabb.* 134, 1; *Jebam.* 76, 1.

(10) Bergel: *Med. der Talm.*, S. 72. References to *Sabb.*, 135, 1; *Jebam.*, 71, 1; *Sota.* 12, 1 *Rabb. Genes.*, 57.

The question of the sex of the child, even before its birth, is often a matter of great interest to the parents, perhaps in old Jewish times even more so than now, as the importance of male issue was regarded by them as specially great. Advantage was taken of this natural desire, by the Doctors of the Law, to inculcate charity:—

“What is a man to do in order to beget male children? Rabbi Elazer says: Let him disperse his money among the poor in alms.”⁽¹¹⁾

The announcement of the sex of the child by the attendants, before the actual birth, has been supposed by some to have indicated, in the case of Rachel, who died after a hard labour, that the presentation was by the breech. But the phrase, “Fear not; for now thou shalt have another son” (Gen. xxxv., 17), was very likely a phrase in common use⁽¹²⁾, to encourage the woman in labour with the hope of a living son, before the sex or the event could be possibly known.

A curious point in Biblical criticism, bearing on the determination of the sex of the new-born infant, arises in the interpretation of the command issued to the Egyptian midwives to destroy the Hebrew male infants at their birth. The revised version, which follows pretty closely the authorised, reads:—

“When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birthstool; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.” (Exodus, i., 16).

This version retains the word “stool” or “birthstool,” but puts it in the singular, instead of “stools,” as in the authorised version. But the use of stools or chairs for obstetrical purposes does not seem to be anywhere else clearly indicated in remote antiquity, although they are described at a later period. In a passage in Genesis (xxx., 3), Rachel, in her desire for children, and referring to her

(11) Hershon: *Treasures of the Talmud*. Lond., 1882, p. 24. Reference to *Bava Bathra*, fol. 10, B.

(12) Compare a similar phrase addressed to the dying wife or widow of Phinehas, “Fear not: for thou hast brought forth a son.” (I. Sam. iv., 20).

maid, uses the expression "that she may bear upon my knees;" it has been argued from this phrase that the transition from a living stool—the knees of Rachel—to an artificial stool, serving the same purpose, was very natural. There is a passage in Moschion in which this relationship may be traced; he refers to a "sella obstetricalis," but suggests that if there is no such thing available, the parturient patient should sit on the knees of a woman instead.⁽¹³⁾

Even quite lately a combination of two chairs, with the front legs tied together, and the backs of the chairs separated to an angle of 60° or more, has been recommended as an aid to parturition, the woman sitting on or between them, and supporting herself by clasping round the waist one of her friends standing in front⁽¹⁴⁾. This has been supposed to be analogous to the "stools" (in the plural) referred to in the authorised version, which may have received their Hebrew name suggestive of "double stones" (in the dual) from a certain resemblance to the form of millstones.

On the other hand, the Hebrew word *Avnajim*, in its reference to the idea of double stones, has been regarded by some as referring to the sex of the child—"Seeing from the two stones if it is a son."

In the passage in Jeremiah, xviii., 3, regarding the

(13) Mosehion: "De passionibus mulierum." Spaehii *Gynacciorum libri*, fol. 9. "Si vero sella obstetricalis non est intus fortis, in mulieris femoribus sedere debet, ut illie pariat." Mosehion wrote about the beginning of the second century, A.D.

Some indication of the use of a chair for parturition is found in the Cesnola collection from Cyprus. Amongst the "Votive offerings," apparently, "another group badly defaced, consists of four persons, one holding a new-born babe, while the mother, extended upon a sort of a chair, her face still convulsed by pain, has her head supported by an attendant." *Cyprus, its ancient Cities, Tombs and Temples*, by General Louis Palma Di Cesnola, London, 1877, p. 158. This is possibly the same group to which I find the following reference bearing on the use of a birthstool: "Cesnola Collection from Cyprus, Metropol. Mus., N. York, No. 614; Terra Cotta figure from 4th or 5th Cent. B.C., *Descriptive Atlas of Cesnola Collection*, I. Pl. lxvi., No. 435."

(14) W. Asbe Smith: "On certain non-instrumental aids to Labour." *Transactions of the Edinburgh Obstetrical Society*, Sessions 1871-74, Edinburgh, 1875, p. 140. Prof. Robertson informs me that in Syrian villages, at the present day, an obstetrical chair is lent out for women in labour; it is a large arm chair, with the front of the seat presenting a concavity.

potter, this same Hebrew word is used and is there translated "wheels;" here, also, we can trace a certain resemblance to double stones. One rendering of the passage in Exodus gives the meaning as "on the wheels," or "on both wheels" (before the vessel leaves the potter's wheels)—in the sense of expeditiously, *i.e.*, the murder of the male infants was to be carried out without delay. The passage in Proverbs xxv., 11, "A word fitly spoken," is rendered in the margin (A.V.), "Spoken upon his wheels," it has been thought that such phrases may have been in current use, derived from the potter's work, just as our phrase, derived from the smith's "Strike the iron when it is hot."

Others, again, construe the word as referring to a *stone basin*, named perhaps from its peculiar shape and resembling "hand mills in being made of stones, the lower of which was hollowed, the upper serving as a lid."⁽¹⁵⁾ Kalisch renders the passage in this sense, "When you do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women you shall look upon the basin; if it be a son, you shall kill him," etc. In support of this view he quotes from Thevenot, Travels, ii., p. 98, "The Persian kings order the new-born male infants of their relatives to be killed in the stone basins in which the children, immediately after their birth, used to be washed, lest these offsprings, if allowed to live, become dangerous to their government." Certainly the analogous practice here mentioned is very striking in its resemblance to that ordered by Pharaoh.^(15*)

(15) Kalisch: "*Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament.—Exodus*"—London, 1855, p. 17. See also Kotlmann: "*Die Geburtshülfe bei den alten Hebräern*," Marburg, 1876, S. 26.

(15*) Dr. Robertson, Professor of Oriental Languages in Glasgow University, on reading my MS., has sent me notes of an important article by Stade (*Zeitschrift für die Alttest. Wissenschaft*, Bd. vi., 1886) on the very points here discussed, *viz.*, "to bear upon one's knees" (Gen. xxx., 3; L. 23; Job iii., 12), and on the "Stools" (Exodus i., 16). After a long discussion, the writer comes to the conclusion that the text should be amended in Exodus i., 16, so as to read "knees" instead of "stones" or "stools," etc. Dr. Robertson is not in favour of amending the text rashly, and thinks that Böttcher's rendering, "on the wheels," *i.e.*, before the potter's vessel comes off the wheels,—as

A curious point as regards the sex of the new-born child has reference to the different periods required for the purification of the mother, as laid down in the Levitical laws, according as the child was male or female. For the ordinary menstrual uncleanness, the period fixed was seven days (Lev. xv., 19). In the case of childbirth it was ordained (Lev. xii., 2) that the mother should be—

“ . . . unclean seven days; as in the days of the impurity of her sickness shall she be unclean . . . And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days:” this, IF SHE “BEAR A MAN CHILD.” “BUT IF SHE BEAR A MAID CHILD, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her impurity: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.”

That is to say the period of uncleanness and purification was double in the case of a female birth from what it was in the case of a male birth. To modern ideas this distinction seems very strange: indeed, if one judged on theoretical grounds, the tendency nowadays would be to fix the period of disturbance in the mother's system as longer in the event of her bearing a male child, inasmuch as the labours resulting in male children are usually somewhat more severe than in the case of female children.

A curious suggestion occurs in the Talmud, by an anonymous authority, in accounting for the greater severity of the labour at the birth of a female than a male child—a difference which seems to have been generally accepted as a fact.⁽¹⁶⁾ He states that the female foetus turns round before birth, so as to present with the face anteriorly, while the male presents with the face posteriorly: the difference of the two sexes in this respect—the one born as if lying on the back, and the other as if lying on the

(16) See footnote No. 7 in this paper.

indicating rapidity of action—has much to commend it, inasmuch as the idea of the command of Pharaoh, judging from the midwives' reply, seems to have been to make it appear as if the male children were *still-born*, rather than that they were killed. He thinks the preposition used—“upon”—(super) is a strong point in favour of this rendering, the authorised English version overcoming the difficulty arising from this preposition by supplying the word *them*, which is not in the text.

face—is explained on a curious sexual theory which need not detain us here.⁽¹⁷⁾

It has been pointed out that in the Hippocratic treatise *De Natura Pueri*, there is a somewhat similar distinction to that laid down in Leviticus, as to the sex of the child determining a longer or shorter period of purification for the mother after childbirth. The book referred to is not regarded as one of the genuine Hippocratic works, but this point is of little importance in connection with the coincidence of ideas referred to. Littré summarises the passage thus⁽¹⁸⁾:—"According to the author, the lochial discharge continues thirty days in the case of a boy, and forty-two days in the case of a girl." The whole passage, as rendered by Littré, may be translated thus:—"In fact, the lochial purification lasts generally forty-two days for a girl, this is the longest, it is complete; but terminating in twenty-five days this will also be without danger; for a boy thirty days, this is the longest, it is complete; but terminating in twenty days, this will also be without danger." This difference in the view of the Hippocratic writer seems to depend on the relatively slower development of the female fœtus than of the male, a difference which he refers to as a definite fact—this slower process of development in the fœtus resulting in a slower process of purification in the mother also.

In the Talmud the following doctrine is laid down by some:—

"Before 40 days there is no fœtus formed; at the beginning of the 41st day the fœtus, whether male or female, is already formed."

"Rabbi Ismael (founding on Leviticus xii., 4, 5) holds that the male is formed on the 41st day, and the female on the 81st day."⁽¹⁹⁾

Long discussions seem to have taken place on this point, and Rabbi Ismael appealed to observations made on slaves

(17) Rabbinowicz: *La Méd. du Thalmud*, p. 84. Reference is to *Nidah*, Fol. 31.

(18) Littré: *Œuvres d'Hippocrate*, Tome vii., p. 501.

(19) Rabbinowicz: *La Méd. du Thalmud*, p. 83. Reference to *Nidah*, Fol. 28.

who were killed by a Greek queen, and on dissecting the embryos the males were found formed at 40 days, and the females at 80. His opponents replied that the female foetus might have been conceived 40 days earlier; he answered that the mothers had been carefully watched, so that such errors were avoided; the others retorted that they did not doubt the watching, but the watchers! As Juvenal says, *Quis Custodiet ipsos Custodes?*"

The sex of the child determined the operation of circumcision, for no analogous operation was practised by the Jews in the case of females. Circumcision was by no means limited to the Hebrew race, but its practice by them at such an early period as the eighth day depended evidently on its being regarded—not as a sanitary or hygienic precaution—but as a religious rite. It has been supposed by some (although the narrative does not seem to require any such explanation) that in the finding of Moses the nationality of the infant was recognised by the Egyptian princess from the mark of circumcision. A tradition already quoted ascribed a congenital defect of the prepuce to the great lawgiver, but this would, of itself, so far simulate the appearance of circumcision.

There is a good account of circumcision given by Dr. Asher Asher⁽²⁰⁾. The two parts of the operation—cutting off the foreskin (Chitach), and the revulsion of the mucous membrane, so as to expose the glans (Peria)—have both been long regarded as essential in the Jewish rite; but it is not quite clear when the latter became established. A third act—sucking the blood from the wound (Meziza)—came also to be regarded as essential. Merely cutting off the foreskin is a simple matter, and if this constituted the whole operation, it may account for the apparent ease with which circumcision

(20) *The Jewish rite of Circumcision, with the prayers and laws appertaining thereto. Translated into English with an introductory essay by Asher Asher, M.D.* London, 1873. See also Wunderbar: *Bibl.-tal. Medicin*, 3. Abth., S. 23.

was carried out in early times. When the operation consisted of the first act only, the traces of it might readily, in the course of years, become obscured; and the possibility of obliterating the evidence of circumcision by manipulation, so as to elongate the remnant of the prepuce by dragging it forward, was obviously much greater. In 1st Maccabees, i., 15, we read of certain of the people who "made themselves uncircumcised." Some, indeed, allege that it was from this date that the act of the *Peria*, or revulsion of the mucous membrane, became so important in the eyes of the Jewish law. Even in the time of Celsus ⁽²¹⁾ and the Apostle Paul ⁽²²⁾, attempts at the obliteration of the mark of circumcision seem to have been not uncommon.

The subject of circumcision ⁽²³⁾ is too large a one to be pursued here; but in connection with the care of young children it is proper to remark that, according to the Talmud, great precautions were to be taken to avoid danger to the child, not only by selecting experienced and safe operators, ⁽²⁴⁾ but also by seeing that the child was in a fit state for undergoing the operation, and that it was not affected with any illness such as infantile jaundice, or erysipelas, or any inherited hæmorrhagic tendency. ⁽²⁵⁾ The following quotation shows the care bestowed in this matter:—

"Abbaja states: The following has become my rule:—If the newborn child is extremely red, then is the circulation of the blood not yet in proper order; if it is of a greenish colour, then is there a deficiency in some of the essential constituents of the blood; in both cases we put off the circumcision in case of danger." ⁽²⁶⁾

(21) Celsus: *De re medica*. Lib. vii., Cap. 25. An operation for this purpose is mentioned.

(22) 1 Corinthians vii., 18.

(23) Remondino (P.C.) *History of Circumcision*; Philadelphia, 1891. See also Dr. Asher Asher's book, quoted in the first foot-note.

(24) Rabbinowicz: *La Méd. du Thalmud*, p. xliv.; a Jewish surgeon is recommended, but failing such, a Pagan surgeon; reference to *Menahoth*, Fol. 42.

(25) Asher: *Circumcision*, p. 24; also Wunderbar: *Biblisch-Talmud. Med.* 3. Abth., S. 43; 2. Abth., S. 64; Rabbinowicz: *La Méd. du Thalmud*, p. 135.

(26) Wunderbar: *Biblisch-Talmud. Medicin*, 2. Abth., S. 64.

In the Talmud we find a statement of the following widely prevalent opinion :—

“The child born at the term of nine months or of seven months is regarded as viable, but it is considered not viable if born at eight months.”⁽²⁷⁾

In another passage, however, we find more philosophical views developed with great subtlety. Although it is admitted that the fœtus of eight months is not viable, while the fœtus of seven months is, the question is discussed, What is an eight month period? This is ruled to include those children who are known not to have completed nine months ; but this deficiency is recognised if the hair and nails are not like those at the full term. From this the conclusion is drawn that

“if the hair and the nails are found as they ought to be in a fœtus at the full term the child is viable, even although born at eight months ; for in this case Rabbi admits that the child must have finished its development at seven months, but that its birth has been delayed a month.”⁽²⁸⁾

The question as to when a child is to be reckoned as “born,” is discussed in the Talmud. If presenting by the inferior extremity, it is to be reckoned as born when the greater portion has issued forth ; if presenting by the head, when the greater portion of the head has come through.⁽²⁹⁾

In another passage, essentially the same doctrine is laid down in connection with the question of operating on the fœtus to extract it in pieces ; this is reckoned legitimate, in certain cases ; for “the life of the mother is greater than that of the fœtus.” But if the child is “born,” according to the above definitions, “it is forbidden to touch the infant, for it is not proper to kill one person to save another.”⁽³⁰⁾

(27) Rabbinowicz : *La Méd. du Talmud*, p. 135 ; reference to *Schabbath*, Fol. 135.

(28) Rabbinowicz : *La Méd. du Talmud*, p. 153 ; reference to *Jebamoth*, Fol. 80.

(29) Rabbinowicz : *La Méd. du Talmud*, p. 83 ; reference to *Nidah*, Fol. 28.

(30) Rabbinowicz : *La Méd. du Talmud*, p. 105 ; Reference to *Oholoth*, Perek VII.

If a child seemed still-born, insufflation of air was resorted to in order to restore it to life :—

“If a new-born child has no breath, one should blow breath in, and it will begin to breathe.”⁽³¹⁾

The helplessness of the new-born babe is referred to by the Talmudists, and he is described as requiring the most careful attention, as unprotected by any natural coverings, and as unfurnished by any means of defence or protection, during the whole of childhood, except the power of crying. Crying is, indeed, they say, the first sign of his experiencing the painful contact with the outer world immediately on birth. One instance, however, is given by the traditions of the Talmud of laughing replacing crying, in the case of the birth of Nimrod. The helplessness and future sorrows of the new-born have impressed many in all ages with the idea of the better lot of not being born at all, and the Talmudists are alleged to share this opinion.⁽³²⁾

The “Afterbirth” is referred to in the book of Deuteronomy (xxviii., 57) as one of a series, including husband, son, daughter and children, which even a tender and delicate woman might be driven in her extremity to think of eating.

In the Authorised Version, and in the Revised also, this reading is only given in the margin; the rendering in the text is “her young one that cometh out from between her feet,” but in view of “children which she shall bear,” mentioned immediately after this word, the idea conveyed by this rendering seems quite superfluous, and the marginal reading is evidently correct.

(31) Wunderbar: *Biblisches-talmud. Medizin* 3. Abth., S. 52. Reference to *Tr. Sabbath*, Fol. 130. See also 2. Abth., S. 64; reference to *Midrasch Rabba Schemoth I.*

(32) Bergel: *Medizin der Talmudisten*, S. 70. For the story of Nimrod, he refers to *Seder hadoroth*. For the helplessness of new-born infants, he refers to *Berach* 6, 2. For the opinion that it is better not to be born at all, he refers to *Erub*, 13, 2; compare also Job iii., 11, “Why did I not from the womb?” etc.; also x., 18, “I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.”

In the Talmud we find a reference to the "afterbirth" bearing specially on the subject of this paper, viz., a treatment of the Placenta, by placing it in oil and wrapping it in fine wool or cotton, as a kind of *sympathetic measure*, for the warming and reviving of the new-born child. ⁽³³⁾

The first offices performed for new-born infants are thus referred to by Ezekiel (xvi., 4) :—

"And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to cleanse thee ; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all."

Kotelmann ⁽³⁴⁾ says there is no indication anywhere of the nature of the instrument with which the cord was cut, although he suggests that the Hebrews may have used a stone, after the manner of the ancient Egyptians. That a ligature was used is, perhaps, suggested by the continuation of the passage in Ezekiel : "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee weltering in thy blood." This would seem to suggest that the bleeding of the new-born child was a further evidence of neglect on the part of those who should have taken care to prevent this hæmorrhage.

The washing in water to cleanse the new-born infant is too obvious an attention to call for any remark, but the question of "salting" seems somewhat strange to us. It has been supposed by some that the use of salt, when mentioned along with the bath, was to remove the *vernix caseosa*, which water alone often fails to effect ; but more probably its use was associated with the idea of its antiseptic and roborant properties. Some indication of this use of salt for the newly-born infant is found in Galen, where he speaks of the whole body of the infant being sprinkled moderately with salt, so that the skin may be rendered more dense and solid. ⁽³⁵⁾

(33) Wunderbar : *Biblisch-talmudische Medicin*, 2. Abth., S. 64 : the reference is to *Tr. Sabbath*, 129.

(34) Kotelmann : *Die Geburtshülfe bei den alten Hebräern*, Marburg, 1876, S. 43.

(35) Galen : *De Sanitate tuenda* I., 7 : Kühn's Edition, Tom. 6 p. 32. "Ergo recens is natus infantulus ejus corporis constitutio omni noxa vacat, primum quidem fasciis deligetur, sed corpori prius toti sale modice insperso, quo cutis ejus densior solidiorque iis quae intus sunt, partibus reddatur."

With regard to swaddling clothes, we read in the book of the Wisdom of Solomon, vii. 4.

“I was nursed in swaddling clothes and that with cares.”

The “swaddling” of the infant is also referred to in the New Testament (Luke ii., 7); indeed, it seems to have been so generally known that the word came to be used in a metaphorical sense, as in the book of Job (xxxviii., 9) where “thick darkness” is spoken of as a “swaddlingband.”

These four things enumerated by Ezekiel are insisted upon in the Talmud as necessary for the new-born infant. ⁽³⁶⁾

That the nursing of the infants at the breast was regarded as a sacred duty devolving on the mothers is evident from various references :

“Even the jackals draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones ;

“The daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

“The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst.” (Lamentations iv., 3, 4.)

The mother refusing suck is thus placed below the level of the jackal and compared to the ostrich ; till quite recently, this bird was erroneously supposed to neglect her offspring.

“She leaveth her eggs on the earth,

“And warmeth them in the dust,

“And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,

“Or that the wild beast may trample them.

“She is hardened against (or dealeth hardly with) her young ones, as if they were not hers.” (Job xxxix., 14, 15, 16.)

In accordance with such ideas, amongst the great blessings which could be invoked were “Blessings of the breasts” (Gen. xlix., 25); and equally amongst the greatest calamities, “Dry breasts.” (Hosca ix., 14.)

Although the mothers seemed to suckle their infants as a general rule, there are indications of nurses, also, being employed for this purpose. Pharaoh’s daughter is repre-

(36) Rabbinowicz : *La Méd. du Talmud*, p. 134. Reference to *Schabbath*, Fol. 129.

sented as saying to a Hebrew woman, not knowing her to be the mother of the infant Moses,

“Nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.” (Exodus ii., 9.)

This mention of wages and the question of Moses' sister :

“Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee ?”

both seem to indicate a current practice of hired wet nurses.

In later times there are repeated indications of nurses in Royal Families (2 Sam. iv., 4 ; 2 Kings xi., 2 ; 2 Chron. xxii., 11) ; in some of the cases, however, it does not seem quite clear whether the nurses were merely attendants on the children (compare Ruth iv., 16) or whether they actually suckled them.

The Talmud discusses the question of one or other of the parents objecting to the child's being nursed by its own mother. If the woman wishes to nurse it, it is held that the husband cannot object, because she requires to nurse the child to prevent her milk doing herself harm. If, on the other hand, it is the woman who refuses to suckle her infant, on the ground of its having been customary in her family to engage nurses for the purpose, the husband cannot force her to do so.⁽³⁷⁾ The question is carried further, the parents being supposed to belong to different social grades : If the wife's family has not been in the habit of engaging wet nurses, and if the husband's family has, what then ? The general principle is laid down that the wife rises in social position with her husband, but is not dragged down by him. The application as to nursing is to be inferred.

Rebekah's nurse was sent away with her when she left her home to be married (Gen. xxiv., 59), and the following passage shows the respect in which the nurse was held :—

And Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried below Beth-el under the oak : and the name of it was called Allon-bacuth (The Oak of Weeping). (Gen. xxxv., 8.).

(37) Rabbinowicz : *La Méd. du Talmud*, p. 159. Reference to *Kethouboth*, Fol. 61.

The difficulty of getting a new-born infant to suck is thus referred to in the Talmud :—

“If the child cannot suck, then it has a spasm in its mouth. We take a small brazier and hold it before the mouth of the child, whereby it is warmed, the spasm is relieved, and the child is able to suck.”⁽³⁸⁾

The influence of the diet of the mother or nurse on the sucking infant was regarded by the Talmudists as very similar to its influence in pregnancy on the unborn child. The following refers to sucklings :—

“Thus when mustard is taken [by the nurse], greedy children may be expected to be developed; when cress is taken, blear-eyed children; when clay is eaten, ugly children; when new wine is taken, dark-coloured children; when old wine and flesh, healthy children; when eggs, large-eyed children; when fish, delightful children; when parsley, beautiful children; when coriander, muscular children; and when paradise apples, pleasant-smelling children.”⁽³⁹⁾

The influence of pregnancy on the nursing mother falls to be mentioned in connection with weaning, but in reference to its injurious influence on the milk, it may be mentioned here that this formed one of the three cases in which a woman was permitted by the Talmudists to prevent conception by mechanical precautions :—

“In three different cases females ought to make coition unfruitful by using a tampon in the vagina, viz., a delicate girl still immature; a pregnant woman; and a woman who is suckling. The first, so that if she chances to conceive, she may not have to atone for the parturition by her life. The next, so that a second foetus may not be formed and press to death the one already in the womb; and the last, so that her babe may not be caused to pine away by the occurrence of pregnancy.”⁽⁴⁰⁾

The absence of the monthly discharges in nursing mothers was explained thus in the Talmud :—

“Nursing women do not menstruate because the blood is transformed into milk.”⁽⁴¹⁾

(38) Wunderbar : *Biblisch-talmud. Medicin*, 3. Abth. S. 52. Reference to *Tr. Sabbath*, Fol. 130.

(39) Bergel : *Die Medizin der Talmudisten*, S. 74. Reference to *Ketub.* 60, 2. Compare passage quoted in Note (2) of this paper.

(40) Bergel : *Die Medizin der Talmudisten*, S. 23. Reference to *Jebam.* 12, 2.

(41) Rabbinowicz : *La Méd. du Thalmud*, p. 79. Reference to *Nidah*, Fol. 9.

The danger of the new-born infant being overlaid by the mother, is brought out in the case known as the "Judgment of Solomon" (1 Kings, iii., 19), while there is also an allusion to the other woman rising on the fourth morning to give her child suck.

The period or process of weaning, and the weaned state, are referred to several times in the Bible. With the parallelism characteristic of Hebrew poetry we find reference to:

"them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts."
(Isaiah xxviii., 9.)

This period of life is also referred to in various figurative expressions. In Psalm cxxxi., 2, as rendered by Professor Cheyne, we read:—

"Surely I have composed and quieted my soul,
as a weaned child in its mother's arms ;
my soul within me is like a weaned child."

Coming to more prosaic allusions, we are told that

"Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned."
(Gen. xxi., 8.)

According to the Rabbins, weaning occurred after the second year. ⁽⁴²⁾ In the case of Samuel, his mother did not accompany her husband, but waited at home till the child was weaned:—

"The woman tarried and gave her son suck, until she weaned him."
(1 Sam. i., 23.)

It is not clear what age he was, but although it is stated that "the child was young," it would also appear as if he were of sufficient age to walk about, as it is stated also that—

"the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest."
(1 Sam. ii., 11.)

The plainest statement as to the age of weaning, although referring to a later period of Jewish History, is contained in 2nd Book of Maccabees vii., 27. :—

"O my son, have pity on me that bare thee nine months in my womb,

(42) Kotelmann:—*Die Geburtshilfe bei den alten Hebräern*, Marburg, 1876, S. 49. He quotes Kimchi on Gen. xxi., 8.

and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age, and endured the troubles of education."

The idea of the relationship between weaning and the liability to an immediately subsequent pregnancy, is very widely current amongst women, and leads to the practice of prolonged lactation still. This relationship seems to be referred to in Hosea i., 8 :—

"When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son."

Another aspect of the relationship between nursing and pregnancy has been already mentioned, inasmuch it was held that the mother's milk may thereby suffer. The question as to when widows who were nursing children might be allowed to marry, is discussed in the Talmud ; this question of course depends on the period of weaning. The following rulings are found :—⁽⁴³⁾

"A widow who has a child at the breast ought not to be allowed to be married or affianced till the child has attained the age of twenty-four months."

Others were less stringent. Simon, the son of Gamaliel, said :—

"I am of opinion that, if it is desired to suckle the child twenty-four months, the mother may be permitted to marry at twenty-one months ; or, if to suckle the child eighteen months, she may marry in fifteen months ; for, in the event of her becoming pregnant, this will not hinder the milk for three months after conception."

In another passage we read :—

"If the mother has given the child to a nurse, or if she has weaned it, or if the child is dead, she may marry."

"The Ghemara, however, decides that the woman cannot marry simply on weaning the child (For, says Raschi, she might wean it prematurely on purpose to marry)."

Attendants on young children seem to have included men as well as women. Thus we read in the Old Testament :—

"Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing-father carrieth the sucking child." (Numbers xi., 12.)

"And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers." (Isaiah xlix., 23.)

(43) Rabbinowicz: *La Méd. du Talmud*, p. 158, the following reference is given: *Khethouboth*, Fol. 60.

In the New Testament, instead of the reading—

“suffered he their manners in the wilderness,”

we find in the margin—

“bare he them as a nursing-father in the wilderness.” (The Acts of the Apostles xiii., 18.)

From the passage in Isaiah just quoted one may, perhaps, infer (from the phrase *their* queens) that the nursing father may have been simply the husband of the woman entrusted with the suckling of the child; and that, as her husband, he might have duties to perform in the care, along with her, of their young charge till the period of weaning arrived. No doubt there is in the Talmud the case of a man nursing a child at his own breast, but this is narrated as a great marvel.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Of the methods of playing with and carrying young children we have glimpses in such phrases as:—

“The children that are dandled in the hands.” (Lament. ii., 20; compare also verse 22.)

“Ye shall be borne upon the side, and shall be dandled upon the knees.” (Isaiah lxvi., 12.)

“They shall bring thy sons in their bosom, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.” (Isaiah xlix., 22.)

The highly poetical passage in Isaiah xi., 8, has been adduced in this connection:—

“And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk’s den.”

This is quoted as a proof (although proof in such case seems unnecessary) that the nurses played with the children, the argument being, I presume, that a sucking child is too young to “play” alone, and so must have a nurse to play with, whereas more independence of action is attributed in the passage to the weaned child.

The period after weaning when the ordinary diet⁽⁴⁵⁾ became established, with advancing years, and when, with this,

(44) Bergel: *Medizin der Talmudisten*, S. 74. Reference to *Sabb.* 53, 2.

(45) Compare Isaiah vii., 22:—“For butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the midst of the land.”

intelligence and the moral sense became developed, is thus referred to by the Prophet:—

“Butter (curds) and honey shall be eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good.” (Isaiah vii., 15.)

With this, the period covered by the title of the present paper may be regarded as completed. Although there are many interesting and curious points regarding the occurrence of puberty and sexual maturity referred to in the Talmud, they belong to a subsequent period in the life-history of the young.





